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"A MARGIN FOR EXCELLENCE"

A TUITION POLICY FOR
PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
IN MASSACHUSETTS

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

883/87

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A TUITION POLICY FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

The public system of higher education exists to serve the Commonwealth. Public colleges and universities contribute to the well-being of the state and its people by providing opportunities for individuals to advance their understanding and skills, enabling them to participate effectively and productively in the life of their society. The academic programs offered must, therefore, be accessible to all who can benefit from them; and they must meet the standards of quality demanded by a competitive world. As public institutions responsible to the people and supported in large measure by their tax dollars, the system must remain responsive to the needs of Massachusetts residents, and accountable to them for both efficiency and quality.

Among the statutory obligations of the Board of Regents is to "develop a rational and equitable statewide tuition plan for all institutions of public higher education in the Commonwealth, which plan shall take into account by type of institution, the per student maintenance costs, total mandated costs per student and the need to maximize student access to higher education regardless of a student's financial circumstances." The basic elements of a plan are clearly specified in the legislation; but the relationship Among them is complex, and the Board now lacks authority to fully implement such a comprehensive policy. Here, for the first time, we propose legal and policy initiatives to

achieve the goal set forth eight years ago. This Tuition Policy will effectively promote rationality and equity and access, improve the "margin for excellence" by providing resources to support academic quality and institutional responsiveness, and permit greater public management accountability in public higher education.

This policy builds upon the one adopted by the Board in 1984. That version set forth general principles, but stopped short of proposing firm articulation of principle and practice. The principles laid out in the earlier document remain the foundation of our policy today. The Regents continue to believe that a tuition policy for the public system should be grounded in its mission of service; that this implies an excellent system open and attractive to qualified students of every socioeconomic background; and that, to achieve this end, all students should be expected to assume a fair share of the cost of their education insofar as they are financially able to do so. No policy that limits the ability of our colleges and universities to serve a diverse student body, or that deprecates society's vital stake in the education of its people, can be consistent with our fundamental commitment of service to the Commonwealth.

II. PRINCIPLES

The Regents' Tuition Policy is guided by seven basic principles:

1. **Tuition and Access**

Society must assure that the benefits of higher education are available to all its citizens. Everyone recognizes that tuition charges can limit accessibility to higher education. Without financial aid, our public institutions would be beyond the means of many of our citizens. We assure continued accessibility through a comprehensive financial aid policy that directly links the cost of education to the amount of financial aid available to students who wish to enroll in our colleges and universities.

There are some who believe that a better way to assure accessibility is to keep tuitions low or to charge no tuition at all. The net effect of such a policy is to provide a substantial subsidy for everyone who attends a public college or university, regardless of income. In this scheme, the link between the ability to pay and financial aid is severed.

Lower tuition is generally associated with a relatively low commitment to financial aid; this policy actually

works against access for needier students who require affirmative financial assistance to meet costs beyond tuition.

The tuition policy proposed herein takes a very different course. It assumes that those who can afford to pay should pay a stated amount for the benefits they received from their education. It seeks to establish the principles of equity and partnership that determine the state subsidy of their education and says that the individual student who can afford to do so should pay the remainder.

2. Tuition and Equity

For public higher education in Massachusetts and nationally, tuition charges represent only a fraction of the cost of the education provided. The state's primary role in financing higher education is a recognition that access to it has become a basic American right, and that the benefits of an educated populace redound to society at large. Although the federal government contributes significantly to higher education, the state's major partner in its support is students and their families. This contrasts sharply with other nations where postsecondary education is a free social benefit; yet,

strikingly, no college and university system in the world is as democratic, in character or participation, as ours.

The rationale for charging tuition in public higher education is <u>equity</u> - the belief that individuals who derive personal benefit from a service should assume their fair share of its cost. Beyond the public purpose of public higher education, there is no doubt that its programs provide important advantages to the graduates themselves. Without tuition charges, we face the likelihood that a public system created to promote social equality by removing barriers to talent and ambition will instead become fiscally regressive, channeling tax-supported benefits to individuals who are in many cases comfortably circumstanced, and who thereby gain further advantages.

Ideally, tuition charges should apportion the cost of higher education according to a calculation of the distribution of its benefits between the student and the Commonwealth. No such calculation is possible, of course. The most widely used estimate was developed more than a decade ago by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, assigning approximately one-third of the benefits to the individual, and two-thirds to

society. This figure, adopted in a number of states, was recommended as a guideline in the Regents' 1984 Tuition Policy. The Commission also recommended a lower cost percentage for students at community colleges, a measure indirectly embodied in the 1984 policy. After an extensive review of policies in other states, and consultation with presidents, chancellors, students, and other interested group in our own system and state, we have adopted as a goal that students be responsible for 30% of the cost of education at the public universities and state colleges, and 25% of the cost at the community colleges.

3. Tuition and Partnership

Inherent in the principle of equity is a principle that there is a partnership between society (the Commonwealth) and individual citizens who enroll in public higher education. If a student is expected to pay a fair share of the cost of education, society assumes an obligation to support higher education with its appropriate share. Anything less than that on the part of either the citizen or the state undermines the principle of equity and threatens access and excellence as well. The principle of partnership is especially important because there are those who believe that the

state will shrink from its responsibility and shift to the individual consumer an increasing cost of attending a public college or university. We do not believe this to be the case, but we affirm the secondary principle that a failure on the part of the state to provide the appropriate support requires the Regents to refuse to raise tuition to make up the difference.

4. Tuition and the Margin for Excellence

Public higher education is accountable to the people of Massachusetts and to its students - accountable for using appropriated funds and tuition revenues to support programs of the highest quality possible. Current patterns of both revenue and expenditure, and the existing practice of remitting tuition revenues to the General Fund of the Commonwealth, all militate against accountability in this sense. Increased tuition revenue retained for specified uses on the campuses where it is generated would provide a vital "margin for excellence" for our public colleges and universities.

Within this decade, Massachusetts has moved from the bottom ranks in net state appropriations for higher education to a competitive position in per student support. The quality of higher education opportunities

available to Massachusetts residents has improved accordingly; at the same time, further improvement is limited by two factors.

First, an unusually large proportion of the new funds, and of total appropriations, has been devoted to salary increases. In FY 1988, more than 80% of our appropriated budget went to personnel - a very high figure by national standards, and even by comparison to other high-cost-of-living states. Although maintenance of adequate and competitive salary scales for faculty and staff is rightly of highest priority, this trend leaves little room for protecting other budget accounts from the corrosive effects of inflation, or for providing additional funds to strengthen existing programs and add new ones.

Second, while the Commonwealth has achieved a top-ten rank in net appropriations per student, our standing in total expenditures per student is lower because our tuition revenues are below average. By holding tuition increases below the rise of appropriations, inflation, and personal income, we have in effect "capped" the aspirations of our public colleges and universities to academic excellence. Theoretically, all the resource needs of our system could be met from appropriations,

especially as the importance of independent higher education here significantly reduces the proportion of the total state budget devoted to higher education. In practice, however, we cannot expect that state allocations will continue to grow at their recent pace. If our students are to receive the opportunities they need, their contribution must rise to match the Commonwealth's.

Tuition charges set at a fixed share of costs, rising with (not replacing) appropriations, and retained by the campuses for general educational purposes will provide the margin of excellence we seek, and enhance the public accountability of our institutions. Students will be assured that their payments are devoted to supporting their programs. The institutions themselves will be afforded improved flexibility, and greater responsibility for resource management, within the statewide system. Most important, retention will provide additional resources for the campuses, resources that will spell the difference between a good system and an excellent one.

This tuition policy is, thus, envisioned as a means of providing new resources that will enable our campuses to take their places among the best public institutions in

the nation. Only with that margin of excellence can we claim that our citizens have access to first-rate higher education. Without it, we deny them genuine access and choice, and relegate many to an education that will inevitably be second best.

5. Tuition and the Recognition of Complete Costs

A fee is a payment for a specific service provided to students, e.g. athletics. Some fees are voluntary; that is, students only pay a fee if they use the service. Other fees are mandatory; all students are required to pay the fee. Mandatory fees represent those charges that are generally used to offset the costs associated with library resources, testing, graduation, health services and other student activities. Fees are currently set and retained by the campus. To students (and parents), mandatory fees are indistinguishable from tuition. They become part of the cost of education - what a student must actually pay to attend a college or university. A rational tuition plan includes all mandatory charges rather than limiting its scope to formal tuition while ignoring required fees. The Regents' enabling statute requires the Board to relate tuition charges to the "total mandated cost per student." This proposed tuition policy takes account of fees as well as tuition.

Without a public policy role in the determination of fees, a rational tuition policy is impossible because, in effect, the Regents could not control what a student actually pays to gain an education. The recently adopted Regents' policy that the most needy students should receive financial aid equal to 100% of tuition and fees provides further incentive for a statewide fees policy. Without such a policy, the state's fiscal commitment to financial aid at our public colleges and universities could be determined by various local boards of trustees without appropriate statewide accountability.

6. <u>Tuition and Predictability</u>

A tuition policy should incorporate the principle of predictability. It does not serve the public interest when tuition decisions are subject to the ad-hoc political, fiscal, and other pressures that too often surround them. It is a fact that educational costs will rise. It is a further fact that these costs must be paid. Policy decisions designed to keep tuition as low as possible must ultimately give way in light of finite public resources. The resulting pattern of "stop and go" tuition increases does not provide a rational method by which resource needs can be met, or a reasonable information base upon which students and their families

may plan to meet these increasing charges. This tuition policy will seek to assure predictability.

7. Tuition and Direct Benefits

Finally, those who pay their appropriate share of cost should benefit directly from the payments they make. This is only possible if tuition paid by students is retained on their individual campuses, and expended there for services and improvements. The present practice of paying tuition into the general revenue fund provides no assurance that monies will be expended on the campus where the payments are made.

III. POLICIES

In order to achieve the stated principles, the following policies are adopted:

A. Tuition Goals[1]

Inherent in the principle of equity is the notion that those who benefit from higher education should be expected to share directly in the cost of providing that education. Since the Commonwealth benefits from the economic, professional, social and cultural contributions of well-educated citizens, its taxpayers provide a substantial portion of the support of public higher education. Students and their families, however, remain responsible for doing their part, subject to their ability to pay. The determination of the appropriate share of costs to be assigned to these direct beneficiaries is a matter of judgement; the goals established in this policy are based on extensive examination of relevant research, national standards and trends and conditions and practices within our system.

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1. See the Regents' Report, A Proposed Tuition Policy for Higher Education in Massachusetts: Analysis and Recommendations, Board of Regents, May 1988 for historical data and projections on tuition and fees.

1. The goal for the undergraduate tuition rate at the senior colleges shall be set at 30% of the prior fiscal year's average educational cost per student. Tuition should be adjusted to this limit over a period of time consistent with the maximum increases set forth in "5" below.

2. The goal for the tuition rate at the community colleges shall be set at 25% of the average cost per student. Tuition should be adjusted to the limit over a period of time consistent with the maximum increase set forth in "5" below.

3. The goal for graduate tuition shall be set at 125% of the segments' undergraduate tuition. Tuition for the Medical School (M. D. Program) shall be established separately; for other programs at the University of Massachusetts/Worcester, tuition shall be equal to that for graduate programs at the Amherst campus. Under special circumstances, the Regents may consider higher tuitions for other discrete professional programs. In no case shall such tuition for degree programs exceed the per student cost of the program.

4. Once the goal is achieved, the Chancellor shall recommend to the Regents tuition adjustments that generally match the change in the average educational cost per student.

5. The maximum annual increase for resident students in any one year shall not exceed 9% and this maximum increase or cap shall continue during and after the adjustment process.

6. To maintain the goals of equity and access, the Chancellor shall ensure prior to recommending any tuition increase that the annual appropriation from the prior year or the recommended appropriation in that fiscal year is consistent with a level of support that maintains the relative cost burdens between the state and the students.

7. While the tuition goals and the cap on year-to-year increases will result in predictability for parents and students in higher education, it must be emphasized that the Chancellor will take into account all contingent circumstances prior to recommending to the Board of Regents a tuition increase in any given year. [In particular, the Chancellor shall consider increases in the cost of

living, the higher education price index, the amount of financial aid available, and changes in disposable income.] In short, tuition increases should be predictable but not automatic.

B. Other Issues

The tuition policy, adopted in 1984, addresses a number of other tuition-related issues that need to be either reaffirmed or modified in light of current practices and legislative concerns.

a. Cost of Education: The definition includes: instruction; academic support services; institutional support services; student services; and plant maintenance. This definition of cost of education [6~conforms both to the language of the enabling legislation and to present budgetary practices. It accords with informal Massachusetts tradition as well as established national trends, and provides a consistent broadly accepted basis for equitable allocation of current educational costs.

The unit cost of education shall be the total cost of education, as defined above, divided by the number of state-supported full-time equivalent (FTE) students.

The tuition for each year shall reflect the previous year's costs. At present, FTE students are defined as equivalent to 15 credit hours for undergraduate programs and 12 credit hours for graduate programs. The cost base for the state colleges and community colleges shall continue to be based upon segmental averages.

The Massachusetts College of Art, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and the Medical School, which offer specialized professional programs, have historically received individual consideration in the funding process. The current policy that their costs should not be included in segmental calculations will continue. Their tuitions will be established in consideration of the needs of the Commonwealth and of professional and institutional imperatives, rather than program cost alone.

Two additional cost- and tuition-related recommendations are made, however;

1. The cost base and tuition for the University of Lowell and Southeastern Massachusetts University may be calculated and established separately.

2. For the University of Massachusetts, the cost base will include allocations to the Amherst and Boston

campuses, and other appropriate university accounts exclusive of support for land-grant functions. The Regents, on recommendation of the Trustees of the University of Massachusetts, may establish differential tuitions for the various campuses. The average tuition for the University should equal 30% of the average student appropriation per FTE.

b. Program Differentials: Establishment of individual tuition levels for each academic program would be inequitable as well as impractical. Except in a few cases, there is no adequate means of apportioning either program costs or student enrollments among programs. The character of colleges and universities, and the opportunities they provide, are shaped by the breadth of their academic offerings as well as the strength of individual programs.

Moreover, considerations of equity and of public policy would require that different student shares of costs be determined for each program, depending upon how its benefits were likely to be distributed. For example, nursing is an expensive program preparing graduates for valuable public service - but not for high-paying positions; to charge tuition on a program-cost basis would discourage students from entering the field.

Differential tuition by program also has disturbing implications for equality of access to higher education, especially in view of the complexities it could create for financial aid administration.

Tuition differentials between lower division and upper division undergraduate study are similarly inadvisable, for many of the same reasons.

3. **The Regents should not permit, as a matter of general policy, differential tuition by program. In exceptional cases, the Regents upon petition by a college may waive this policy. The requesting institution must demonstrate that such a differential charge is appropriate in terms of significant cost differences or that the exemption would serve an appropriate public purpose.**

c. Part-Time Students

The current policy concerning part-time students appears to be appropriate. Tuition for part-time students should continue to be determined by pro-rating, according to the number of credits taken, the established full-time tuition for the appropriate segment, level, and program.

d. Out-of-State, Resident Alien and Foreign Students

Tuition for out-of-state students, formerly set at the full cost of instruction, currently varies by segment. For example, it represents 81.3% of cost at the state colleges, 70.5% at the University of Massachusetts, 64.8% at the regional universities and 62.1% at the community colleges. There is a need to re-establish a clear policy in this area. Furthermore, we believe that the policy should be consistent with generally accepted practices in other states.

4. Tuition for non-resident (out-of-state) students shall be set at 100% of the cost of education as defined by current policy (i.e., the prior year's average appropriation per FTE.)

5. Resident aliens who meet the standards for Massachusetts residency, and students similarly regarded by federal law, shall pay in-state tuition.

Many of the Commonwealth's most valued and productive citizens were initially attracted here, as non-resident aliens, by higher education opportunities. As a result of recent legislation, however, our policy shall be:

6. Tuition for students affected by provisions of Chapter 7120 of the Acts of 1985 shall be set at the total cost (as defined by current practice) of their education.

Finally, the Board of Regents has historically supported student exchange programs as a means of broadening the educational experience of both participants and those enrolled at host institutions; and continues to believe that the New England Regional Student Program contributes to expanded opportunity and the efficient use of higher education resources in the region.

7. Non-resident students attending Massachusetts public institutions under such reciprocal agreements shall be charged tuition and fees as provided by the agreements.

Tuition Retention, Waivers and Remission

C. Retention

A policy of tuition retention will provide the campuses with the resources that are necessary to maintain or improve their "margins for excellence." These funds will create an opportunity for the colleges to improve

responsiveness in program development, and to strengthen educational resources.

1. **Beginning in FY 1989, the colleges and universities shall be permitted, subject to legislative approval and under regulations developed by the Chancellor, to retain increases in tuition approved by the Board of Regents.**

D. **Expenditure Guidelines**

The colleges should have a fair amount of discretion in the use of these revenues. They should, however, be fully accountable to the Regents and the Legislature in the manner in which the funds are collected, maintained and allocated.

1. **Each public college and university will establish, under regulations adopted by the Regents, a Tuition Retention Fund. Retained funds must be expended in accord with these regulations. Tuition funds shall not be expended to support, wholly or in part,"01" positions and 08 accounts (heat and general plant operations).**

2. The account shall be subject to the control and authority of the Board of Trustees. The colleges and universities shall prepare expenditure plans to be approved by the Board of Trustees and filed with the Board of Regents. The expenditure plans will serve as source documents for the purpose of public accountability. Expenditures will be subject to audit by the Regents' Compliance Unit.

E. Tuition Waivers and Remission Programs

Students attending public colleges and universities have enjoyed the benefits of a host of tuition waiver and tuition remission programs for a number of years. The programs range from strict need-based financial aid programs to legislated entitlement waiver and remission programs. All of these programs represent foregone revenue to the Commonwealth. Currently, there are four categories of programs which allow for a waiver or remission of tuition at public colleges and universities. These programs are:

a. Tuition Remission which benefits employees under collective bargaining agreements.

b. Legislative Waiver Programs which extend waivers to categories of persons such as veterans, Indians, police officers and firefighters.

c. Campus-based Tuition Waiver Program adopted by the Board of Regents in 1981 which allows the campuses to waive tuition for needy students.

d. Tuition Waiver (Emergency) Reserve Fund which provides campuses with additional resources to meet the needs of eligible students.

With these categories in mind, we adopt the following policies:

1. The Commonwealth must absorb the cost of all tuition remission programs negotiated through collective bargaining agreements or through waiver

programs mandated by the Legislature. To absorb these costs, the tuition revenues remitted by each campus to the state shall be reduced to reflect the number of enrolled students, day and evening, benefiting from these programs. In effect, the state will forego revenue it would normally receive, as is the case now.

2. The cost of current waivers in the campus-based waiver program will be absorbed by the Commonwealth. Future growth in the cost of existing or new waivers will be absorbed by the campuses.

The Regents are very much aware of the need to insure that increasing tuitions do not close off access to students who would not qualify for full scholarship support under the recently adopted financial aid plan. We are, therefore, requesting that the Chancellor make use of the Tuition Waiver Reserve Fund to accomplish this end.

3. The Reserve Fund shall be expanded to address the impact of tuition increases on individual campuses. In FY'88, the Reserve Fund represented

approximately $4 million in foregone revenues. The Chancellor should annually report to the Regents on the number and characteristics of students who are being assisted by the Regents' Tuition Waiver Program.

F. College and University Fees

The Regents recognize both the complexity of the fee structure and the importance of local initiative under the stewardship of individual boards of trustees in establishing fees. Nevertheless, no tuition policy can work if the body responsible for establishing that statewide policy has no role in establishing and adjusting campus-based fees. Accordingly:

1. The goal for campus-based fees should be 30% of tuition. Certain fees supporting student life activities initiated and/or approved by student associations or governments should not be included in this calculation. The Chancellor shall appoint a Task Force on Student Fees charged with preparing recommendations to the Regents on those fees that

should be included within the 30% calculation. The Task Force should submit its recommendations to the Chancellor by August 1, 1988. The Task Force shall include College Presidents and student membership.

2. Every college shall be given an opportunity to adjust its fee structure to the 30% cap. The adjustment period should be determined by the Chancellor in consultation with individual campuses. If the Chancellor deems it necessary or appropriate, he may permit an exception to the 30% guideline for an individual campus.

3. Annually, each campus shall provide the Regents with a report on fees by category.

4. These procedures shall be evaluated within eighteen (18) months by the Evaluation Team established under the Tuition Policy. If the Chancellor believes, as a result of this evaluation, that the voluntary nature of this procedures is not meeting the desired objective, he shall recommend changes to the Board of Regents seeking statutory authority as necessary.

IV. POLICY EVALUATION

Many of the initiatives to be undertaken as a result of these policies are new and significant departures from current practices. We believe that it is important that the tuition policy be evaluated in some detail.

1. Within eighteen months, the Chancellor shall formally evaluate the effectiveness of the tuition policy, addressing especially the underlying principles upon which the policy is based. The result of the evaluation, and any appropriate recommendations, shall be presented to the Regents. In consultation with the College Presidents/Chancellors, the Chancellor shall appoint an Evaluation Team to monitor the tuition policy and to undertake the formal evaluation. It is recommended that the team seek the assistance of nationally recognized professionals in finance and financial aid. The Evaluation Team shall include College Presidents and student membership.